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INFO RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0148
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1212
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0539
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1724
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0743
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 000196

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STATE FOR NEA/FO - GRAY, NEA/MAG - HOPKINS, HARRIS
STATE ALSO FOR DS/IP/NEA, DS/ITA, CA/OCS/ACS/NESA
NSC FOR ABRAMS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TS](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MISSIONS CONCERNED OVER GOT SILENCE ON
SECURITY SITUATION

REF: TUNIS 154 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Following January's report by the GOT that it had disrupted a terrorist plot to attack US and UK embassies and diplomats (reflets), security and consular representatives from several Tunis-based embassies and international organizations met on February 7 to discuss the security situation. Attendees expressed disappointment and frustration with GOT information sharing, and openly questioned whether the official information being provided was truthful. In particular, several asked whether economic and tourism facilities were also among the intended targets. The Canadians proposed a joint demarche to "demand" further security information. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On Wednesday, February 7, security and consular representatives from the US Embassy (ARSO and ConChief), Canadian, German, French, and Spanish embassies, and European Commission, United Nations, and African Development Bank (ADB) met at the Canadian Embassy in Tunis. UK and Japanese Embassy representatives were invited but absent.

¶3. (C/NF) Participants agreed that the presence of terrorist elements in Tunisia should not be a surprise, pointing out the involvement of Tunisians in terror efforts abroad, particularly in Iraq and Europe. The greater concern for the assembled group was the lack of cooperation and even basic information sharing by the GOT. The German Federal Police representative reported that the Tunisian MOI took over two weeks to respond to her request for a briefing, while the Canadians remarked they had waited over four weeks.

(COMMENT: This despite official GOT statements of a threat to diplomatic missions. END COMMENT.) Several attendees (French, EC, US, Canadians) pointed out that the Tunisians repeatedly shun offers of assistance on security and CT issues. As an example of the difficulties faced when interacting with the GOT on security matters, the EC representative told of how, when recently reporting a telephone bomb threat to their facility, she was instructed by the GOT to "send a diplomatic note."

¶4. (C/NF) Several attendees questioned whether economic and tourism facilities were also among the intended targets of

this recent plot. As of February 7, none of the attendees reported any information to indicate a direct threat to their nationals or to broader tourist or economic targets in Tunisia. The German representative reminded the group of the GOT's disingenuous initial response to the 2002 Djerba bombing. (NOTE: On April 11, 2002, terrorists linked to Al-Qaeda detonated a truck bomb in front of a synagogue on the island of Djerba. Nineteen were killed, including 11 Germans and two French nationals. For days, the GOT insisted that the explosion was an "accident," even after the diplomatic community, world media, and the Tunisian public had concluded that it was an act of terrorism. END NOTE.) UN and German reps stated their belief that the "number one" priority for the GOT is to protect tourism, and that this priority calls into question the validity of information provided by the GOT on security matters.

¶5. (C/NF) The Canadians, with a level of frustration that bordered on anger, proposed a joint demarche to "demand" further security information from the GOT and to register our shared displeasure with the current level of engagement. While most attendees did not respond directly to this call, the EC representative was immediately enthusiastic. It was noted by more than one attendee that this working level group would not be the appropriate venue to make such a decision.

¶6. (C/NF) COMMENT: While the representatives were unified in concern over recent events and subsequent Tunisian response, there were indications that such views are not universally held within their respective missions. The French Interior Security Attaché twice indicated that the French Ambassador is concerned but "does not believe that this is too major" before adding both times, "and that is one opinion." This statement was made in English and it is possible that

language garbled the Attaché's message, but his comments may indicate some difference of opinion within the French mission regarding the current situation. END COMMENT.

¶7. (SBU) The group agreed that these meetings should continue on a regular basis. The next meeting is scheduled for April 4 at the US Embassy.

GODEC